M&O
Serials
QL 671
.G84

CALIFORNIA
LIBRARY
DEC - 1 1949
RECEIVED
ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

THE GULL
MONTHLY BULLETIN

GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON SOCIETY

VOLUME 31 SAN FRANCISCO CALIFORNIA DECEMBER 1949 NO 12

A MUSICIAN'S APPRAISAL OF BIRD SONGS

The following excerpts are from an article by F. N. Bassett, published in THE GULL, June 1921, entitled "The Element of Music in Bird Voices".

"An orchestral musician, like myself, in listening to bird songs and calls, is almost compelled to compare them with instruments of the orchestra. It early became evident to me, that bird voices naturally fell into two classes regarding their quality of tone. The one group of tones simulates the reed instruments such as the oboe or bassoon, the other comprising open tones such as produced on the flute. . . .

"The most perfect, and therefore the most musical of the reedy tones are those produced by the Nuthatches . . . contrast it with the purest of the flute tones of the call of the Russet-backed Thrush . . .

"The high tones of the Wrens, Warblers, and some of the Sparrows are brilliant, sparkling with laughter, and decidedly lovable, but lacking in deep emotional sentiment. . . . The *Who-whoo* of the Great Horned Owl seems more mournful than the song of the Mourning Dove.

"We search then for a bird with a song unblemished by poor quality of tones and unmarred by any sudden or unmusical punctuation. The Meadowlark falls short of the mark. His song is melodically excellent. He is a great technician, but the tones are struck so heavily that there is an unpleasant metallic ring to them. . . . The Goldfinches, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, and the White-crowned Sparrows all mar their performances with reedy tones of poor quality. The Cassin and Warbling Vireos and the Hermit Thrush have melodious songs but their voices lack the rich quality of pure tones. . . .

"We do not search far for perfection, however. The pure fluty tones of the Purple Finch and the Black-headed Grosbeak meet all the requirements of the most hardened critic. The Purple Finch pours his song forth in notes like liquid pearls, unmarred by poor quality or metallic accents. It is a finished performance of an unassuming, finished artist. It is not so melodious as the songs of many of our interior singers, but the tone quality outclasses theirs. Likewise the Grosbeak, who sings with full round tones, every one of which arouses the greatest admiration. His song is perhaps not quite so good as that of the Purple Finch, for it is uttered in short phrases in a more declamitory manner.

"The Purple Finch, then, in my estimation, outclasses all his competitors, and does it modestly like the unassuming, refined artist who sings for his own pleasure, not ours.

NOVEMBER FIELD TRIP

The November field trip was taken to Rodeo Lagoon, Marin County, on Sunday, November 13, 1949. The trip, similar to the one last year, started at the west end of the tunnel in the Military Reservation.

One group proceeded down the valley through the fields on the north side of the road. The other followed the road. Most of the members of both groups encircled the lagoon.

In regard to temperature the day was pleasant. The sky was partly cloudy. A strong wind, blowing from an easterly direction, interfered to some extent with observations .The number and variety of birds on the lagoon both seemed reduced as compared with last year.

A large group of western grebes was seen on the ocean several hundred yards from our lunch spot on the shore. About forty members and guests were present. Sixty-two species of birds were noted as follows:

Holboell grebe
Horned grebe
Eared grebe
Western grebe
Pied-billed grebe
Brown pelican
Double-crest. cormorant
Brandt cormorant
Great blue heron
American egret
Blk-crown. night heron
Mallard
Pintail
Shoveller
Canvas-back
Lesser scaup duck
Buffle-head duck
Surf scoter
Ruddy duck
Red-breast. merganser
Turkey vulture
Cooper hawk
Sharp-shinned hawk
Red-tailed hawk
Marsh hawk
Sparrow hawk
California quail
Coot
Killdeer
Wilson snipe
Glaucous-winged gull
Western gull
California gull
Ring-billed gull
Heermann gull
Anna Hummingbird
Belted kingfisher
Red-shafted flicker
Black phoebe
Say phoebe
Horned lark
California jay
Raven
Bush-tit
Wren-tit
Marsh wren
Robin
Western bluebird
Ruby-crowned kinglet
Cedar waxwing
Audubon warbler
Western meadowlark
House finch
Green-backed goldfinch
Spotted towhee
Brown towhee
Savannah sparrow
Lark sparrow
Oregon junco
White-crowned sparrow
Golden-crown. sparrow
Song sparrow

L. Richard Leinbach, *Leader and Historian*

SPECIAL OCTOBER FIELD TRIP

The special October field trip on Saturday the 29th started at the Fine Arts Palace lagoon in San Francisco. Large numbers of wild ducks, mostly mallards and baldpate were resting and feeding, some on the grassy bank. Domesticated mute swans and Australian black swans were present, including a well grown cygnet. Other species of ducks seen were: redhead, ring-necked, canvas-back, lesser scaup and ruddy. Pintails are seldom seen on this lagoon, one or two only at a time. Wood-ducks and shovelers are occasional visitors. The water is brackish and unfortunately there is no supply of fresh water for drinking as at Lake Merritt.

In the S.F. Yacht Club vicinity, sanderlings were feeding in the near

foreground and along the beach in the Presidio. A Forster tern was flying by. A western grebe was off-shore in fine plumage, close enough to make the feather pattern easily visible. Some young Hermann gulls, also in fine plumage were resting on a pier near-by. Before the whole group arrived, a young California pelican was standing on the near sea-wall. A mature Heermann gull with vivid red bill was seen in flight. Also noted were black turnstones and Farallon and Brandt cormorants.

Next the party moved by car to Julius Kahn Playground vicinity, and to Mountain Lake in the Presidio. The species noted here were California quail, ruby-crowned kinglet, Oregon junco, Fox sparrow, red-shafted flicker and black phoebe.

Toward noon the party drove to vicinity of the Palace of the Legion of Honor and descended by trail to the ocean shore. The weather was perfect. Additional species seen were: red-tailed hawk, sparrow hawk (sitting upright on a tree in the Presidio displaying the head and back markings in vivid detail, gulls, glaucous-winged and western, California jay, chestnut-backed chickadee, bush-tit, wren-tit, robin, savannah and song sparrow, Brewer blackbird. 36 species in all, representing 24 families. 19 members and guests were present. Leader—Arthur Myer.

E. A. Mayers, *Historian*

RECENT PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED: "Migration of Some North American Waterfowl" published by Branch of Wildlife Research, United States Department of Interior. Fifteen species of ducks and one specie of Canada Goose are charted from the banding stations, to the places of recovery: some in Central and South America, others in the Aleutian Islands.

The Year Book of Indiana Audubon Society publishes on page 14 an article by Dale W. Rice "In Quest of the Whooping Crane". Mr. Rice several times closely observed four of "the world's rarest and most beautiful bird" on the Blackjack Peninsula, south Texas on December 21, 1948. "The whoopers are keeping the location of their unknown nesting grounds as one of the most carefully guarded secrets in the annals of ornithology. Somewhere in the uninhabited Canadian Arctic. "Only 33 left alive in the entire world."

These and other Audubon publications are placed at the Oakland Public Museum for circulation.

"BEYOND THE TRAILS". Anticipation is running high over this new picture-lecture by the Crislers. This film depicts the majestic Olympic Wilderness and its vivid wildlife, in elemental struggles and placid moments. Friday, Dec. 2nd, Lakeview School, Grand Ave. and MacArthur Blvd., Oakland at 8 p.m. Write or phone Miss Clelia Paroni, 575 Vincente Ave., Berkeley 7, (LAndscape 5-6895) for reservations.

SPECIAL DECEMBER WEEK-END TRIP. A two-day trip on December 3 and 4 to visit Sacramento Migratory Waterfowl Refuge near Willows, and the State Game Refuge near Gridley. For particulars see November GULL.

OBSERVATIONS Edited by Junior W. Kelly

One slate-colored Junco, Oct. 23, 6447 Gwin Rd., Oakland; Estella S. Bruce, 7 Black Turnstones, Oct. 3, Marina, San Francisco; E. A. Mayers

2 White-throated Sparrows. Oct. 17, Anderson Springs, Lake Co., a Horned Owl, Nov. 2, Filbert and Lyon Sts., San Francisco; Jos. J. Webb.
Wood Duck, Nov. 12, Fine Arts Pool, San Francisco; 6 female hooded Mergansers, Nov. 16, Phoenix Lake, Marin County; 3 long-billed Curlew, Nov. 15, Bay Farm Island; Junea W. Kelly.

DECEMBER MEETING

The 387th meeting of the Golden Gate Audubon Society will be held on December 8th at the Oakland Public Museum, Lake Merritt, Oak and 14th Sts. The business meeting at 7:30 p.m., the program at 8 o'clock.

Mrs. Joseph Grinnell, Biographer for the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, University of California, will speak on "Spring Bird Notes from the Yukon River, Alaska." Mrs. Grinnell has spent the spring months of the last two years in Alaska. We are most fortunate to have the privilege of hearing Mrs. Grinnell's observations and experiences. She will illustrate her talk with kodachrome slides taken by herself. Guests will be welcome.

No-host dinner at Coit Hotel, 1445 Harrison St., near 14th at 6 p.m.

Laurel Reynolds, *Program Chairman*

DECEMBER FIELD TRIP

On Sunday, December 11, the annual duck census at Lake Merritt will be taken. Meet at 10 a.m. at duck feeding station. Take 9:20 a.m. "B" train from San Francisco. From the East Bay take Bus 51 or 58 transferring to 12 or 18, get off at Perkins St. and Grand Ave. Bring lunch, binoculars and interested friends.

ANNUAL CHRISTMAS BIRD CENSUS for the East Bay will be taken December 26. Territory covered will be from Bay Farm Island, Alameda to St. Mary's Lake in Morago. Those wishing to participate telephone Harry Adamson, TH. 3-9578, and see him at the December meeting. Volunteers are needed.

Golden Gate Audubon Society
formerly
Audubon Association of the Pacific
Organized January 25, 1917
For the Study and the Protection of Birds
Branch of National Audubon Society

President.....Mrs. Ethel Richardson.....887 Indian Rock Ave., Berkeley 7
Corresponding Secretary.....Mr. Joseph J. Webb.....519 California St., San Francisco 4
Treasurer.....Miss Ivander MacIver.....2414 Telegraph Ave., Berkeley 4
Editor.....Miss Minnie H. Young.....2726 Prince Street, Berkeley 5

Monthly meetings second Thursday, 7:30 p. m.

Assembly Room, San Francisco Public Library Larkin and McAllister Sts., San Francisco
Alternate months: Oakland

Joint membership, Local & National $5.00 per Year. Includes Audubon Magazine
Local dues only, $1.50 per year. Student Membership, 75 cts.